



## MICHIGAN SNOWSPORTS INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION

7164 Deer Lake Court, Clarkston MI 48346 • Phone (248) 620-4448 • Fax (248) 620-9238

[www.goskimichigan.com](http://www.goskimichigan.com) • Email [info@goskimichigan.com](mailto:info@goskimichigan.com)

House Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee  
Comments by Mickey MacWilliams, Executive Director  
Date: 09/13/17 Time: 12:00 noon

My name is Mickey MacWilliams and I am the Executive Director of the Michigan Snowsports Industries Association, which represents Michigan's ski areas, ski and snowboard retailers and other related businesses. I thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

The Michigan Snowsports Industries Association, or MSIA, develops programs to broaden the awareness of skiing and snowboarding and to introduce people to our sports. Each year Michigan welcomes between 2 million and 2.4 million skier and snowboarder visits on our slopes. In Michigan, travel for winter leisure and recreation is a \$4.9 billion industry that accounts for nearly one third of the state's leisure travel. Think about that for a minute if you would. **WINTER ACCOUNTS FOR NEARLY ONE THIRD OF MICHIGAN'S LEISURE TRAVEL.**

That's easy to understand, once you see some of our world-class resorts, great ski slopes and wonderful snowmobile trails. It's interesting, no matter where you live in Michigan, you are no further than a two-hour drive to a ski area. Colorado and Utah can't say that! Of all the states that border us, when it comes to winter recreation, we're the best game in town. Plus, **Michigan has more ski areas than any other state, except New York!**

MSIA was formed 27 years ago to speak with one voice for the state ski industry, increase awareness of snowsports and introduce new individuals to skiing and snowboarding in Michigan. Our pilot program – Discover Michigan Skiing – has introduced over 180,000 people to skiing and snowboarding over those years. Each January ski areas across Michigan offer this special learn-to-ski program which includes a lesson, rental equipment and a lift ticket or trail pass - all for as little as \$20. I'm proud to say that Governor Snyder has proclaimed January as Discover Michigan Snow Sport Month.

Did you know that all fourth and fifth grade students have the opportunity to ski free in Michigan? They can with the Cold is Cool Ski & Ride Passport. MSIA is dedicated to improving the health of the children in our state by offering winter outdoor activities for all Michigan kids and their families. But we don't limit it to just Michigan kids, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders from anywhere are welcome to ski free here. Our ski areas have pulled together to offer this program for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders, because they are at the perfect age to learn to ski or snowboard – fearless yet old enough to clearly understand direction. Plus, the Cold is Cool activities are endorsed by the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, Health and Sports.

I would like to ask you to help spread the word about our Cold is Cool program. We send applications to every school in our state, but still the information doesn't make it home to many parents. Through communications with your constituents, we may be able to reach more families so that they may take advantage of this great program.

The jobs that the ski industry creates can't be outsourced. It would be pretty hard to move one of our ski hills to another state, or outsource the ski lift attendants that go with them! Those jobs will always stay right here. The ripple effect of our industry is felt throughout our state. Gas stations, convenience stores, ski and snowmobile outfitters, restaurants, linen services, beverage distributors, lodging facilities and a host of other businesses rely on travelers who head for Michigan's downhill, cross country and snowmobile trails each year.

Michigan has the winter programs, the wonderful ski facilities and unequivocally the best natural resources around. And I am pleased to say that for seven years now we have been able to spread the word. MSIA and Travel Michigan are partners on a Pure Michigan advertising campaign. With matching funds, we broadcast radio ads that direct listeners to the [Michigan.org](http://Michigan.org) website, where they gained valuable information about winter travel and MSIA's programs. Since the ads have run, our website visits have increased by 75 percent. I am proud to say that our campaign and our programs are working to draw travelers from the surrounding states and Canada.

Now, on a more personal note, I want to invite you enjoy Michigan's ski slopes and trails this winter. **Humans were never meant to hibernate.** Michigan has the natural resources, and the best ski resorts, slopes and trails in the Great Lakes region. If you haven't experienced our Pure Michigan winter wonderland, I can make that happen. Nothing would make me happier than to get you out on the slopes or trails with a certified instructor. Just yesterday a group of us met with Travel Michigan and one of our agenda items was planning a media/legislative day on the slopes. You will hear more about this in the coming months and I truly hope you join us for this special day.

In the envelope that I've provided, you'll find one of our MSIA snow scrapers, with our website, [goskimichigan.com](http://goskimichigan.com), printed on the front. Keep this little tool handy! As you know...Winter is Coming! Thank you again for this opportunity and I look forward to working with you in the future.